



Yes Youth Can/Mwamko wa Vijana!

What is Yes Youth Can?

Yes Youth Can is a three-year program to support the empowerment of Kenyan youth as envisioned in the 2010 constitution. The program aims to develop peaceful leaders among 18-35 year-olds, with the complementary objective of improving their socioeconomic status.



Photo: USAID/Donatella Lorch

Enthusiastic bunge members at the Taita Taveta County Forum. Youth-led and youth-managed, the bungenes are helping young Kenyans find a voice and organize to help themselves and their communities.

How does Yes Youth Can work?

Through Yes Youth Can, young people organize themselves in youth-run and youth-led *bungenes*, (parliaments) through which members democratically elect their own leaders at the village, county, and national level. The bungenes provide a structure and a forum for young women and men to mobilize and take action to improve their own lives and those of their neighbors, develop new leadership skills, promote transparent decision-making about their priorities, engage their collective voice on decisions that affect them and revive the true spirit of *harambee* (a Kenyan tradition of community self-help events) as they serve in developing their communities.

Research conducted after the 2008 post-election violence showed that Kenyan youth wanted their own voice in affairs that affect them, through youth-run organizations.

Who implements Yes Youth Can?

USAID's implementing partners offer training, mentorship and skill building activities to the bungenes and focus on supporting youth leadership and entrepreneurship.

YYC /National:	Mercy Corps
YYC /Coast:	CLUSA International
YYC /Central:	Mercy Corps
YYC /Nairobi:	Inuka Kenya Trust
YYC /Nyanza:	World Vision
YYC /Rift Valley:	Mercy Corps
YYC /Western:	Winrock International

Project Duration and Budget

June 2011 - June 2014

\$45 million total budget

How is Yes Youth Can making a difference?

Organizing a Movement

As of mid 2012, close to one million youth from thousands of villages have come together and as many as 20,000 village-level bungenes have registered with the government of Kenya as Self-Help-Groups. Village bungenes have selected representatives to form 25 county-level bungenes. In March 2012, the county bunge leaders gathered to form the National Youth Bunge Association (NYBA) to represent the movement at the national level.

Income Generating Activities & Community Self-Help

The village bungenes have built and are running small businesses such as fish ponds, poultry raising, small scale tea growing, milk sales and jewelry making. They organize community service, focusing on environmental conservation, building and reinforcing peace groups, local garbage collection, making sanitary pads for secondary school girls, pairing up with hospital workers to eliminate jigger infestations as well as doing infrastructure repairs and raising funds to provide reliable water for their communities.

Promoting a Youth Focused Agenda

Bunge leaders are working at building strong relationships with local government officials as a means of promoting a youth-focused agenda. Since early 2012, the bungenes across Kenya have been mobilizing youth in their counties as part of a national government campaign called "My ID My Life" to register Kenyans for national identity cards. Without a national ID card, Kenyans cannot get a job, open a bank account or vote. It is estimated that since June 2012, the My ID My Life has helped roughly 400,000 Kenyan youth to apply for an ID card. In addition, the program is supporting the development of a "Kenya Youth Think Tank" to research youth issues in Kenya with the aim of influencing policies to be more youth-friendly.

Supporting Grassroots Development

Bunges have generated proposals for a youth-led and youth-managed Youth Innovate for Change (Tahidi) Fund for grassroots community development and empowerment projects. By mid-2012, 4,200 Tahidi grants (beginning at 40,000 Kenya Shillings or \$480) were awarded to village bunges in all 25 counties to work on agricultural, environmental, conservation, infrastructure and water projects. In addition, five Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs) have been launched in the coastal counties, and 25 additional county level SACCOs will be launched by the end of 2012.

Yes Youth Can in Action

By midday, 18-year-old Verah Akoth Abonyo had already been standing in line for three hours. The crowd of over 100 people, mostly Kenyan youth, was in a good mood and no one seemed to mind the hot sun or that they had walked hours to get here. "Today is a very happy day for me," Verah explained. "Yesterday I saw a flier calling youth to come here and that my life would change for the better."

The event, organized in the dirt courtyard of a local primary school in Kenya's Migori County near the Tanzanian border, is part of a nation-wide campaign to register and provide national identity cards in the next few months to as many as one million Kenyan youths. For several months now, the bunges across Kenya, through the National Youth Bunge Association (NYBA), have been working with the Kenyan government to mobilize youth. The posters of their "My ID My Life" campaign are plastered in villages from Lake Victoria to the Indian Ocean Coast. And tens of thousands of youth have been showing up to register.

"An ID is more than just a card. It is my life," declared Verah who has been working odd jobs for a couple of years. "I can finally get a real job, go to university. My ambition is to go to college and study information technology." The Migori County Bunge Forum has had huge turnouts mobilizing youth while working in tandem with the local district registration office and the district chiefs. The county registration bureau has only four government employees and is located in a small hut in Migori town. "For us, we can't go out and sensitize people," explained Sephaniah Otieno Ogundo, district registration officer for Awendo district in Migori County. "The youth are the ones going out into the countryside and finding all these people. Without them, we wouldn't get this crowd."

Michael Ngaji, 33, is the county organizing secretary for the Migori bunge forum and he and his fellow bunge members have for several weeks now been walking and riding motorcycles village to village spreading the word

about upcoming mobile registrations, posting fliers on village bulletin boards, distributing "how-to" instructional forms to local youth. "I feel very good because the turnout has been so good," said Michael. "Recently we have been receiving many calls from youth, chiefs, and opinion leaders asking for more mobile registrations. I'm happy that our voice can now be heard on the ground and that our work is respected." As of September 2012, the bunges in Migori County have helped the government register over 81,000 Kenyans.

Photo: USAID/Donatella Lorch



Verah Akoth Abonyo proudly holds up her temporary national I.D. card in Migori County. Youth bunges across Kenya are helping thousands of Kenyans to register for I.D. cards so they can vote, and access schooling and employment.

For more information:

<http://www.facebook.com/NYBAKenya>

<http://kenya.usaid.gov>

Dwaine Lee, Director
USAID/Kenya
Office of Education and Youth
Tel: +254 20 862 2000
Email: dlee@usaid.gov

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